The Vine of Israel

(No. 3243)

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 1911.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. On behalf of the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews, ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 9, 1878.

"Return, we beseech You, O God ofHosts: look down from Heaven, and behold, and visit this vine." Psalm 80:14.

I FEEL somewhat straitened on this occasion because of the specialty of my subject. I have been persuaded by the Society to preach on behalf of the Jews, but my mind does not quite run in the direction which is prescribed for it. I have been so in the habit of preaching the Gospel to everybody, knowing neither Jew nor Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free, that the very recognition of anything like nationality and specialty is somewhat difficult for me. I do not think that the recognition of the distinction is wrong—no, I think it right—but it is so unusual that I scarcely feel at home. I would sooner, by a thousand times, take a text and preach the Gospel to sinners or to saints than discourse upon a special race. Yet is it necessary and, therefore, let it be done. And I trust the Holy Spirit may make our meditation profitable. Assuredly, if there is any distinction which might be maintained, and I think there is none, for that distinction of Jew and Gentile seems to me to be wiped out and obliterated—if there is any distinction, we may, at least, remember that which lingeringly subsists between the seed of Israel and the nations, for God's election of old fell upon them—and when the old world lay in darkness, gleams of light gladdened their eyes! To them belonged the oracles. They were long the sole preservers of the precious Truth of God which they have handed down to us. And if through their unbelief we have taken their place, we cannot but recollect who occupied it for so many centuries—and we cannot but look with extraordinary tenderness and affection and earnest desire to that elder family whom the Lord loved so long and towards whom, I think, His love still burns, as shall be seen when the day comes in which He shall gather Israel again unto Himself!

We shall view the prayer of the text in its reference to Israel. "Return, we beseech You, O God of Hosts: look down from Heaven, and behold, and visit this vine." The vine was peculiarly a type of Palestine and the Jewish nation. When this Psalm was written, the Gentiles were not in the Psalmist's mind, but only Israel. So let us now speak of Israel and let us pray to God that He will return in mercy, behold in pity and visit this vine and the vineyard which His right hand planted.

I. First, let us reflect upon WHAT AN AMOUNT OF INTEREST SURROUNDS THIS VINE—this chosen people.

Brethren, Israel has a history compared with which the annals of all other nations are but poor and thin. Israel is the world's aristocracy and her history is the roll call of priests and kings unto God. At the very beginning, what interest attaches to the planting of this vine! The Psalmist speaks of the Lord bringing the vine out of Egypt and casting out the nations that He might find a trench wherein He might place Israel's roots that she might strike deep, and take possession of the soil. But what wonders God worked in the removal of Israel from the soil of Goshen, wherein her vine seemed to have taken deep root, until the wild boar of Egypt began to uproot her! Never can we forget what He did at the Red Sea. Even at the very mention of the name, we feel as if we could sing unto the Lord who triumphed gloriously and cast the horse and his rider into the depths of the sea! What marvels He worked all through the wilderness when He turned the Rock into a pool of water and made refreshing streams to follow His chosen along the burning sand! Neither can we forget the Jordan—our hearts begin to sing at the mention of the name—What ailed you, O Jordan, that you were driven back when the Lord's ark led the way through the depths of the river and the priests stood still in the midst, while all the hosts of His people passed over dry-shod? Neither can we fail to exult as we think of the planting of the vine in Canaan. Saw you not the walls of Jericho tottering in ruins at the sound of the ram's horns when Israel gave her shout, for the

Lord was in the midst of His people? Therefore the sword of Joshua smote the Canaanites till they were utterly destroyed! The sun stood still upon Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, because the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man, working marvelously with His people, that He might settle them in the land which He gave unto their fathers—the land which flowed with milk and honey!

When I think of such a planting, it seems to me that this vine can never be given up to be utterly burned with fire after wonders as these! It is not God's fashion to cast away a people for whom He has done so much. The commencement of Israel's national history is by far too good to close, as we fear it must, if we judge only according to carnal reason. An era brighter and more glorious must surely dawn and the Lord must bring again from Bashan, and lead up His chosen nation from the depths of the seas. Once again He will make bare His arm, even He that cut Rahab and wounded the dra-gon—and the whole earth shall behold all Israel, both spiritual and national—singing in one joyous song, the song of Moses the servant of God, and of the Lamb! The very planting of the nation makes us feel the deepest possible interest in its welfare. O God, behold and visit this vine, as the vineyard which Your right hand has planted!

Let us reflect again upon the prosperity of Israel and the wide influence which the nation exercised for centuries. I am keeping closely to the Psalm, which is really my text, for we are told that after the planting of the vine, "the hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and

her branches unto the river." No nation has ever exercised such an influence upon the thought of the world as the Jewish people have done. I grant you that some other nations exercised greater influence upon the world's art and sculpture and the like, for Israel eschewed much of art and science, not greatly to her loss, especially since the reason for it was so greatly to her gain. But the idea of one God, which the Lord had graciously written upon the hearts of His elect people, though it took many an age to erase the natural lines of idolatry which Nature had imprinted there—that idea of the unity of the Godhead is a treasure handed to us by the seed of Abraham! The grand Truths which were contained in type and shadow and outward ordinance, and given to the chosen people of God, exercised a far more powerful influence over the world than, perhaps, most of us have ever dreamed! I feel certain that the religion of Zoroaster came from the Jews. I believe that much of whatever is pure in Eastern religions might be distinctly traced to the teachings of Moses, to gleanings of the Israelite vintage which were carried to the nations through their commerce and intercommunication— perhaps directly and distinctly by the teachings of Jews who journeyed there as exiles in captivity.

The earth had become corrupt even in father Abraham's time. And though, here and there, there might have been found goodly individuals like the Patriarch, Job, adhering to the simple worship of the one only God, yet for the most part, the whole world was sunken in idolatry. But the Light of God came to it and remains in it, gleaming strangely in the darkness like flashes of lightning amidst the blackness of a tempest! That light has always come, I believe, by the way of Israel! The original light of tradition grew dimmer and dimmer and threatened to die out, for in transmission from father to son its brightness was sadly clouded with human error. But the Truth retained much of its vitality and purity in the midst of Israel and from Israel it influenced the rest of the nations. In the days of Solomon, how proudly did the Temple stand upon its holy hill, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, the one Pharos of the midnight sea of humanity! That little country—we often forget what a very little district Palestine occupied—was, nevertheless, the very queen among the nations! From far-off Sheba they came to hear the wisdom of Solomon and to other lands the rumor of his glory extended—and all his greatness was connected with the worship of God, for she who came from Sheba, came to hear all the wisdom of Solomon "concerning the Lord, his God." That little land thus influenced all lands and transmitted far-off down the centuries what was known of the ever-blessed God among the people! To me it seems so sad that she that sat over against the treasury should now be poor. That she that laid the daily showbread before the Lord should now be famished. That she that piled the Temple and brought the offering, should now turn away from the one only Sacrifice and should these many days remain without priest or temple! Alas poor Israel! Our hearts take the deepest interest in you and we pray the Lord to look down and behold, and visit this vine,

when we remember the days of your glory and all the splendor of the Revelation of the Most High in the midst of His people!

Nor does the interest become one particle the less when we come to the time of Israel's decay. She would imitate the heathen and go aside to false gods—nothing could cure her of it. She was chastened again and again and, at last, it came to banishment and the people were scattered. Alas for the tears that Judah and Israel shed! What ocean could hold them all? How God's people were made to smart, and cry, and groan! Let the waters of Babylon tell how salty they flowed

with Judah's griefs. How could they sing the Lord's song in that strange land? What a history of woe has Israel's story been! And then, when they were brought back cured of idolatry as, thank God, they most effectually are, there came an equally mournful decay—for formalism, the absence of all spiritual life—the mere observance of outward ritual, came into the place of idolatry and the people in whom all the nations of the earth were blessed had the Christ among them, but refused Him! "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Woe was the day! Speak of it with sevenfold sorrow. He came for whom they long had waited—Israel's Hope—and they refused Him! Yes, they crucified Him.

My tongue will not attempt to tell what came of it, when His blood was on them and on their children. Earth never saw a more terrible sight than the siege and destruction of Jerusalem! Then did they sell the ancient people of God for a pair of shoes and the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, were esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter. The enemy plowed the holy place, sowed it with salt, and the seed of Abraham were scattered to the four winds of Heaven! Alas, the evil ceased not when the last stone was overthrown, but wrath followed the fugitives. Through many, many centuries Israel was persecuted—shame covers my face—persecuted by those who called themselves Christians! The blood of Israel hangs in great clots upon the skirts of Rome and will bring down upon that thrice-accursed system the everlasting wrath of the Most High! Did they not grievously oppress the Jews in Spain and every other Catholic country—remorselessly hunting them down as if they were unfit to live—torturing them in ways that it were impossible for us to describe, lest your cheeks should blanch as you heard the horrible story? The men that were of the same race as the Christ of God were so hated by the professed followers of Jesus that no indignities were thought to be great enough, and no severities to be fierce enough for execution upon those they thought to be the execrable Jews!

Thank God, such persecution is now over—let us hope forever—at least in the Western world. The race would have been stamped out, however, if Rome's tender mercies could have worked their will. Go to the Ghetto, today, in the Jews' quarter in Rome, and see the Church, as I have done, in which a certain number of Jews were compelled to hear a sermon, once in the year, leveled at their own race and faith, and over the door of which is written what from such a quarter is a wanton insult to them—"To Israel He says, All day long I have

stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Verily it would be so eternally if the hands of Rome were the hands to be stretched out—when she encouraged, if she did not command the racing of Jews in the Corso, and the pouring of contempt upon them in the rudest fashion! Israel would never worship images, saints and virgins! Blessed were they as a nation for this thing, at least, that they utterly rejected the idolatry of which Rome is shamelessly guilty! It were far better to not be a Christian than to think Popery to be Christianity, for it is one of the vilest forms of idolatry that ever came from the polluted heart of man! Alas, poor Israel, what have you suffered! What tongue can tell your woes? I feel compelled to apply to Israel the language which Byron applied to Rome, when he called her "the Niobe of nations," and reckoned all sorrows beside hers but petty misery—

"What aire our griefs and sufferance? Come and see Jerusalem in heaps, and plod your way O'er steps of broken thrones and temples."

Look, too, on a princely people crushed under persecution, laboring and finding no rest. Princes were hanged up by their hands. The faces of elders were not honored. Then was fulfilled Jeremiah's Lamentation, "How is the gold become dim! How is the most fine gold changed! They that did feed delicately, are desolate in the streets—they that were brought up in scarlet, embrace dunghills."

But we will not end here, my Brothers and Sisters. The interest which we feel with regard to Israel and which makes us pray, "Lord, visit this vine," rises as we think of its future. I am no Prophet or interpreter of the prophecies, but this much seems clear to me—that the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of the Jews, will have dominion over them and they shall be converted and shall acknowledge Him to be the Messiah who was promised to their fathers—so does the New Testament teach us as well as the Old! It seems to me that we may work for the conversion of Israel with the absolute certainty that if we do not see it, ourselves, yet it shall be seen, for the natural branches of the olive, which for a while were cut off, shall be grafted in again, and so all Israel shall be saved. The future of the Gentiles in the fullness of its Glory can never be accomplished till, first of all, the Jews shall be ingathered. You shall have no millennial day, or full brightness of Messiah's Glory, until yonder, by Jordan's streams and Judah's deserted hills, where once the Savior worked, and walked, and preached, the song shall yet again arise of Hallelujah to the God of Israel!

One more thought and then I leave this point of the interest we take in Israel. We must forever take a special interest in the Jews because of them came our Lord. He was so completely a Man that one forgets that He was a Jew, and, perhaps, for the most part it is best that we should, for He is more a Man than a Jew. But still, "He took not up the nature of angels, but He took up the seed of Abraham." Jesus is the Son of David. The Jews have a part in Him, after the flesh, which we have not. And, amid all the privileges which we enjoy, we can well afford to let them have everything that they can claim. And they can certainly prove a special kinship to Him whom our soul loves. Oh, if it were for nothing else but that

our Savior was of the Jews, we ought to love them and make them the subject of our prayers and of our earnest efforts! Surely the mention of that will suffice and I need not say so much as one solitary word more! Interest in the Jews, indeed, is a very wide subject, and we have said enough for the present purpose.

II. NOW, SECONDLY, WHAT IS IT THAT THE JEWISH PEOPLE NEED? We have been exhorted by all these

things to pray for this vine. What is it that is needed?

The answer of our text is, "Look down from Heaven, and behold, and visit this vine." A visitation from God is the one thing necessary for Israel. For what purpose should God visit the Jews, then? I say, Brothers and Sisters, it is the one essential thing in order to give them spiritual life. Our acquaintances with the interior of the Jewish commonwealth at the present time is not very large, but some of us have observed that there are two sorts of Israelites. Some are devout— devout men with some of whom it has been our privilege to have hearty fellowship in matters of common interest touching the things of God. When we have spoken together of the Providence of God and of faith in the Divine Mercy, we have been much of the same mind. In the late debate brought on by Colenso, we were able, in comparing notes, to feel the same zeal for the value of the Old Testament and for the Glory of the ever-blessed God! Whether we were Christians or Jews, we were equally zealous to repel the infidel assaults of the famous master of arithmetic. We meet now and then with men whose sincerity and devotion we could not doubt at all—would to God that their sincerity led them to search the Scriptures and to examine the claims of our Lord Jesus! Such men lament that many of their people seem to have no religion, or—what is almost the same thing—to have nothing more than the outward form. Their being of the Israelite race is distinctly recognized and never for a moment held back—the Sabbath is almost universally hallowed, for which let Israel put to shame many so-called Christian lands! Much is done that is commendable, much which exhibits high integrity and uprightness, but yet, to a large extent, the race is sunk in worldliness and misled by superstition. Oh, that God would visit the Jew and endow him with an enquiring and unprejudiced heart, with longing after the God of his fathers, with a deeper reverence and a truer zeal for the Glory of Jehovah!

The visitation of God may well be entreated that He would next grant enlightenment to His people, taking away the veil which has been cast over their eyes and enabling them to see the true Messenger of the Covenant. There are thousands of Israelites today who only need to know that Jesus is the Messiah and they would as gladly accept Him as any of us have done. It seems to us so strange that they can read the 53rd Chapter of Isaiah and so many other plain passages of the Prophets and of the Psalms without seeing that the Man of Nazareth is the Christ of God! Yet they do read, but the veil is on their hearts so that they do not perceive Christ in their interpretations. Alas that the Son of Righteousness should shine and Israel should be in darkness! With many of the seed of Abraham there is an

honest desire to receive whatever can be shown to be the Truth of God. If the Lord will touch their eyes and remove the scales—what an enlightenment on the whole nation would follow! A nation would be born in a day! What joy for us, what honor to God, what happiness to themselves if they might but be delivered from their present alienation! O God, You alone can do this! We cannot. All arguments seem to be in vain, but do You behold, and visit this vine!

When the spiritual life of the nation shall have been revived and there shall be an enlightenment of the intellect, they will only need the Spirit to work upon the heart. Even as the Holy Spirit has quickened and regenerated us, so must it be with them, for there is no difference between Jew and Gentile in this matter. The same regenerated work is needed—the same enlightening of the Holy Spirit—and if the Lord will do this, our hearts shall be exceedingly glad!

III. WHAT, THEN, CAN WE DO? We are great debtors to Israel, what can we do for her?

Some people are always afraid of telling Christian people to do anything. They mutter between their teeth, "The Lord will do His own work," and they are afraid that they should be interfering with God's prerogatives. Ah, my dear Brothers and Sisters, I am not afraid that some of you will ever do the Lord's work, for you do not do your own! That part which you cando is neglected! Do not be so mightily frightened lest you should be too active! It is God's work to

visit Israel and gather out His people and He alone can do it—but He works by means. What, then, would He have us

do?

I answer, the first thing we can do is to pray for Israel. You believe in the power of prayer, do you not, my Brothers and Sisters? Why, some of us can no more doubt the power of prayer than we can doubt the force of a steam-engine or the influence of the law of gravity, because to us the effects and results of prayer are everyday things! We are in the habit of speaking with God about everything—and receiving replies which to us are as distinct as if He had spoken to us with words. We can speak boldly in prayer to God concerning Israel! No nation can be nearer to God's heart than the Jews. We may be bold with the mighty God. We may open our mouth wide, for He will fill it. We may plead with Him urgently after this fashion—"Will you not glorify Yourself by the salvation of the Jews? What could You do that would more signally strike the whole world with awe than if you were to turn this wonderful nation to the faith of Christ? You have taught them the unity of the Godhead, you have burnt this Truth into their very souls—now teach them the Deity of Your Son who is One with You! Bring them to rejoice in the Triune God with heart and soul, and all lands shall hear of it and say with wonder, 'Who are these?' Great God, were not these Your messengers of old? When You needed heralds, did You not look to Israel? You took James and

John, and Peter and Paul. You will find such as these among them, now, if You will call them—both boastful Peters and persecuting Pauls—whom Your Grace can transform into mighty testifiers for the name of Jesus.!"Let us pray to God to do this. We can pray!

The next thing we can do is to feel very kindly towards that race. I know all that will be said about converted Jews, and I lament that there should have been grave occasion given in many instances. But, for my part, I have been glad of late to smart a little for the sake of my Lord. I have said, "Well, it was a Jew that saved me and even if this professed convert should have a hypocritical design upon my purse, I had better be deceived by him that turn away an honest kinsmen of my Lord." I do not marvel that there should be deceivers among the Jews, for have not we plenty of such in our churches, who, for the sake of loaves and fish and pelf, creep in among us, pretending to be followers of Christ when their hearts know nothing about Him? In all ranks and conditions of man, hypocrisy is sure to be found! But for all that, we do not turn round and say, "The Gentiles are a bad lot. We will have nothing more to do with them because two or three of them deceived us." The Gentiles are always taking us in! We know they are and still we have hope for them. And so must we always have hope towards Israel—and instead of thinking bitterly and speaking bitterly, we must cultivate kindness of spirit both to those who become Christians and to those who remain in unbelief. I, for one, thank God that this land has now for several years swept away the civil disabilities of the Jew. He is no longer a stranger in the land, but he settles down in the midst of us and exercises all the rights of citizenship. May the kindness of feeling which has prompted this change—and it came, I think, mainly from earnest Christians—lead the Israelites to think kindly of our

faith!

Another thing we can do, dear Friends, is to keep our own religion pure. I marvel not that Jews are not Christians when I know what sort of Christianity, for the most part, they have seen. When I have walked through Rome and countries under Rome's sway—and have seen thousands bow before the image of a woman carried through the streets—when I have seen the churches crammed with people bowing down before pieces of bone, hair and teeth of dead saints, and such like things—I have said to myself, "If I were a worshipper of the One true God, I would look with scorn upon those who bow before these cast clouts, moldy rags, pieces of rotten timber and I know not what besides!" No, no, good Jew! Join not with this idolatrous rabble! Remain a Jew rather than degrade yourself with this superstition! If the Lord has taught you to know that there is an unseen God who made the heavens and the earth, and who alone is to be worshipped—if you have heard the voice of thunder which says, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one God,' stand you to that and go not one inch beyond it, if the way before you invites you to the worship of things that are seen, and the reverence of men who call themselves priests—and the whispering out of every filthy thought

into a confessor's ear! No, no, no, Israel! You are brought very low, but you are far too noble to become an adorer of crosses and wafers, and pictures and relics!"

Even in our own land there is a good deal which one would not wish a Jew to regard as Christianity. To my mind, baptismal regeneration is about as glaring a piece of Popery as there is to be found in the world! And they can hear that lie publicly taught in England! Grievous, too, it is to my very heart that they may hear it among those who profess a purer form of faith than that of which we have spoken. Try, Brothers and Sisters, to keep Christ's religion as Christ taught it. Purify it. Let it come back to its original form!

Labor also to be Christians in ordinary life. If a Jew says, "I would like to see a Christian," do not let him see a person full of superstitions. Let him see one who believes in the Triune God, who tries to live according to the commands of God, and who, when he talks about Jesus, lets you see the mind which dwelt in Jesus—the same mind being in him. When once the Church of God shall bear a clear testimony to the Truth of God both with lips and life, great hindrances will be taken out of the way of Israel. I know you say, "Well, Jews ought to know that we hold a very different faith from Romanists." I know that you think so, but I am not able to perceive how the Jews are to learn the distinction, for Papists are called Christians as much as we are! Their religion is dominant in some countries—it is prominent in every country. How is the Jew to know that it is not the religion of Christ? As he thinks that it is so, he declares that he will have nothing to do with it—and I, for one, cannot condemn him, but approve of his resolve! I only hope that as the years roll on, we who worship God in sincerity and have no confidence in the flesh, we who are saved by the faith which saved Abraham, who is our father after the spirit though not according to the flesh, that we, I say, may be able to bring this purer faith more clearly to the knowledge of Israel and that God will lead His ancient nation to be fellow-heirs with us! We must keep our doctrine pure and hold it individually with clean hands and a pure heart—or we have not done all that we can for Israel.

This being done, I will next say that we must each one evangelize with all his might. Do this not among Jews, only, but among Gentiles, also. Wherever you are, tell abroad the knowledge of Jesus Christ! Do not live a single day, if opportunity serves you, without testifying concerning the love of God which is revealed in the Cross of Calvary. Your prayer should be for the whole Church of God, "Behold, and visit this vine." And as a large number of God's elect ones are as yet hidden in darkness, let us pray unto the Lord that He would visit this vine and make these branches to spring out into the Light of God—that on them, also, there may be rich clusters to His praise!

Brothers and Sisters, we are, ourselves, saved, are we not? Come, before you go away, let the question be put to you, Are you saved? Are you really Believers in Jesus? Is the Christ formed in you? Have you realized that He is your Savior? Are you trusting Him now? Will you live to Him? Are you consecrated to Him—spirit, soul and body? If you are, that is the

first thing. If you are not, I cannot ask you to pray for Israel, or for anybody else till, first of all, God has put a cry into your soul for yourselves. If you are saved, then let me ask myself and you, "Are we doing all we might for the honor and love of Jesus?" Sitting on these seats, might not many say, "We have not yet begun to live for Christ as we ought"? May the Lord quicken you!

There was a young man here, one Thursday night, when I closed with some such words as these, who derived lasting benefit from them. He was a gentleman doing a large business, to whom it had never occurred that he might preach Christ. It did occur to him that night—and he straightway went to the town in which he lived and began to preach in the streets! He is now the pastor of a large Church, though he still continues his business—and his is an example to be imitated by many! I would to God that some young man might be quickened to feel that he must do something, for Israel perhaps, for Christ, certainly! And you, Sisters, may you feel a Divine impulse upon you while you pray God to visit the vine which He has planted! May He also visit you and make you fruitful vines unto His praise! The Lord bless everyone of you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM46.

To the ChiefMusician for the sons of Korah, A Song upon Alamoth.

This Psalm is often called "Martin Luther's Psalm." Whenever there was any great trouble, Luther used to say, "Let us sing the 46th Psalm together and then let the devil do his worst." This is the Psalm, too, from which Mr. John Wesley preached in Hyde Park at the time of a great earthquake. While the earth was shaking and there was a great storm, Mr. Wesley preached from the second verse—"Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

Verse 1. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. All creatures have their places of refuge. "As for the stork, the fir trees are her house. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats and the rocks for the conies." All

men also have their places of refuge, though some are "refuges of lies." But God is our refuge and strength," the Omnipotence of Jehovah is pledged for the defense and support of His people. "A very present help in trouble"—One who is near at hand—always near, but nearest when He is most needed. Not much entreaty is required to bring Him to the aid of His people, for He is close at hand and close at heart, "a very present help in trouble."

2. 3. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and are troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof [See

Sermon #1950, Volume 33—EARTHQUAKE BUT NOT HEARTQUAKE.] Here we

have, you perceive, a mention of the greatest convulsions of Nature, yet the Believer fears not! Doubtless, too, these verses are intended to be a picture of the great convulsions that take place in the Providential dealings of God. States and kingdoms that seem to be as

solid as the earth will one day be removed. Dynasties that seem as fixed and firm as mountains may soon be swept away into the sea of oblivion. We may have famine, war, pestilence and anarchy until the whole earth shall seem to be like the sea in a great storm! Yes, hope may fail with many and the stoutest hearts may shake at the swelling thereof. Yet let the worst come to the worst, God's people are still safe! As one old writer says, "Though God should, to use His words concerning Jerusalem, wipe the earth as a man wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down, yes, though He should break it into a thousand shivers, yet need not His people fear, for if He does not protect them under Heaven, He will take them up to be with Him in Heaven!" If Heaven and earth could be mingled together, and chaos could return, yet as long as God is God, there is no use for the Believer to fear!

3. Selah. We may well pause and renew our confidence in the God who has never failed us, and who never will fail any who trust Him.

4. There is a river, the stream whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. Whatever river may have been in the Psalmist's mind, it was the symbol of Sovereign Grace flowing freshly and freely from the sacred Fountain of Eternal Love to make glad the people of God! And now we have the Inspired Book, we have the preached Word, we have the many precious promises, we have the blessed Spirit, Himself, and all these make a glorious river, the streams whereof "make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High."

5. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The Hebrew expression is, "at the turning of the morning." Our marginal reading gives it, "when the morning appears." "God shall help her at the turning of the morning."At that period when the night is the blackest, just before the light begins to come, then shall God help His Church. Child of God, this promise is to you, also! When the night gets thickest and the gloom is the heaviest, then God shall help you "at the turning of the morning." He may tarry for a while, but He will tarry no longer than is wise. You shall find, in looking back upon God's dealings with you, that although He sometimes seemed to be long in coming to your help and you cried out, "Lord, how long?" yet, after all, He did help you and that "right early," too!

6. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted. God has but to speak and His stoutest foe shall dissolve like snow when the sun shines on it.

7-9. The LORD ofHosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. Come, behold the work of the Lord, what desolation He has made in the earth. He makes wars to cease unto the ends of the earth; He breaks the bow, and cuts the spear in sunder; He burns the chariot in the fire. [See Sermon #190, Volume 4—the desolation of the lord, the consolation of his

SAINTS.] Here the Psalmist invites us to behold what God has

done in the past. He has desolated the desolaters and destroyed the destroyers! War has been a terrible scourge to mankind, but our God is Master even over war. When I look at the old ruined castles all over our land, I cannot help saying to myself and others, too, "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He has made in the earth," and when I stumble upon some broken-down abbeys, or monasteries and Popish cathedrals, I can but wish that there were more of them, that we might see many such desolations which the Lord has made in the earth! He will get the victory over all His foes and break all His adversaries in pieces—however long He may wait before putting forth His great power in judgment upon them!

10. Be still, and know that I am God—-Here is the command and here is the reason which will help us to obey it. Judge not the Lord hastily! Murmur not at His Providential dealings with you! Be not hurrying and scurrying here and there, but, "be still." In silence and in confidence shall be your strength. "Be still, and know that I am God"—

10. I will be exalted among thee heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. If God is willing to wait, you need not be impatient. His time is the best time and He will be exalted in due time.

11. The LORD of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.